The Prairie Chip	307-635-0148
Mile High	303-431-1404
Other Side of Reality	703-451-4412
I.T.	301-261-7537
Middle Earth BBS	617-393-3875
S.T.A.B.B.	317-849-9311
Skyline BBS	303-457-0320
Atari-OH!	713-480-9310
Paranoia	301-384-6153
Thunder Mountain BBS	206-425-3804
T.A.S.T.E.	317-257-1208
Hologram BBS	201-727-1914
GEnie	Atari ST RT
CompuServe	GO ATARI 16

Contents

Garbage-on-the-Line
-- Comrades at the Modem --

by Linda Woodworth

You have 3 piece(s) of mail waiting. The Electronic Mail System on a
Bulletin Board, is a fabulous way of communicating with someone across
town or the country. As with the later, it is probably someone you have
never met. With some back and forth messages between the two of you, you
can become "friends". I help run a BBS and the chat mode is an excellent
way of getting acquainted. Typing the words to each other rather than
saying them, gets down to the quick of things a lot faster. We seem to
be more direct, thus you find out more about one another in a shorter
 period of time...

A lot can be learned about someone from the regular message bases. How
they enter a message and what style used says a lot about them. I also
believe your true personality comes out in your messages. The VT52
graphics add some _major flash to a message, and some are using it very
cleverly. Either the whole message or just the signature at the end. I
have seen signatures at the end of a message, done very nicely too, using
the symbols on the keyboard. <Some even include pictures>. Quite a few
of you stand out very nicely. A real class job!! Makes it a pleasure to
read what you leave behind. For Example ::

     The \/\/ild/\/\an <<aheeaheeaheeahee>>

```
                    The Gray Mouser
                       ^---^
                       O O                         ===== AC ====>
                        ^
                    ---\ /---
                        "


      Exit...Stage Left     Annonymous 2112
            * *ippie
            ***
            * *acker
                 -=-Midnight Man-=-
```

I have gotten to know the humbler modem portions of society thru the
message system, or through chat, some that I consider _TRUE friends. We
have become involved beyond leaving mere messages to each other on a BBS.
The long talks voice, using the U.S. Mail, exchanging pictures... just
about everything you can do to get closer. I must admit, I care a _great
deal about them !! With some of you, closer to the heart is what we
are... we are involved in each others lives. It's just that we haven't
met... yet.

It gives me a good feeling to know I have friends from the Atlantic to
the Pacific and if I found myself in their kingdom, would have somewhere
to go. I would have no hesitation showing up on their door step, grinning
from ear to ear. Some of us have talked about getting together, and the
idea thrills me to no end... But, I know some of these people are only
to be known only through the keys. This is where it gets difficult for
me, as there is nothing like the companionship of a good friend. How
much rapport can you get from a message?? I used to think it was
fleeting and temporary... mere words on a screen. I was wrong. As I get
better acquainted, I find great comfort, joy, and laughter in their
words. It isn't brief or fly by night at all. The responses give me
pleasure, agitation, excitement. Cause me worry, disappointment, elation
and brings out sheer crazy, insane, free for all, off the wall, playful
FUN and it remains with me for a long time !! There are a lot of people
behind a modem who are... well, I could use a whole range of adjectives,
but I'll just say the whole kit and kaboodle, lock, stock and barrel type
of people !! tis great...

With some of these people, I have shared good times and bad times thru
the years. That is how much our lives have become intertwined. We have
spent time together laughing and crying, staring at this screen, typing
our intermost thoughts. It's my feelings that get me confused at this
type of friendship. Sometimes I want to actually be with the person/
people so much I become frustrated and sometimes quite sad. For the most
part, I realize what our friendship is all about and its limitations. But
it is that moment or two which becomes difficult to handle. I want to
share a drink with a friend, walk in the mountains, or just share a quiet
time.

The need for actual companionship is very important, and BBSing is a
marvelous way to enrich our lives. With FoReM and the F Net, we have
begun transfering messages to boards in the United Kingdom, Canada and
Germany. An international exchange that can enrich the entire world and
bring Nations closer. Just think of the deaf person, or otherwise
handicapped and what this means to them. The Chip has had several deaf
callers and I _know what it signifies !! I just don't want to see the
day this is the only means of communication with others of the human

race. I am an avid science fiction reader, and have read some stories
that scare me to death. I hope things don't get to the point that the
only functioning part of us, is the finger to hit the return key. We
must stay in direct contact with each other too. Guess I ought to start
saving my money for that plane ticket to Ohio, Texas or D.C.   <grin>

_____

Xx AVATEX UPDATE

_____

Elec & ELtek (USA) Corp. has re-introduced several of its avatex products
with new, improved and unique feature additions. The upgrades cover the
Avatex 2400, 1200i and the Avatex 1200hc modems. Coinciding with this
introduction, E+E also announced price reductions for its entire product
line.

THE AVATEX 2400 external modem now features storage in non-volatile
memory of four phone numbers and two user configurations. It also
includes a view menu of configurations and phone number stored. E+E has
also added external switches to allow the user to conveniently choose
either configuration setting, the original factory setting, dumb mode/
smart mode setting or dial-up or leased line operation.

The Avatex 2400 also comes with the two configurations preset with common
user option settings (such as auto-answer ON). Standard features include
2400/1200/300 bps speeds, auto-manual originate/answer, blind dial or
call progress, speaker, and the full compliment of Hayes-compatible
commands and options. The 2400 originally had storage capabilities of
only one configuration and one phone number.

THE AVATEX 1200i internal 1200/300 bps 1/2-card PC modem, in addition to
its standard Hayes-compatible features, now includes operation in any of
four communication ports in the PC or compatible. It originally
supported only COM 1 and 2. The modem card has also been upgraded to
operate in "turbo" PC's -- 8 mhz and above -- including "386" machines.
E+E also states that the Avatex 1200i is now fully compatible with
XT-type short slots as well,.

To promote ease-of-use, the 1200i now comes with external switches to
select such options as the COM port settings, Carrier Detect and Data
Terminal Ready signal settings, and Bell (US) or CCITT (international)
standards.

THE AVATEX 1200hc external 1200/300 bps modem, one of E+E 's veteran
Hayes-compatible products, has also been upgraded to include such
features as full call progress detection, synchronous operation, and
CCITT (international) operation in both 1200 and 300 bps speeds. The
external switch bank has been increased from 8 to 12 switch settings for
additional programmable options. The front panel function buttons have
been changed to accommodate Synchronous/Asynchronours operation, and an
Originate/Answer feature for convenient leased line or manual operation.

The Voice/Data button continues to be an easy-to-use feature for on-line
voice-to-data switching or manual dialing.

E+E notes that all of the products will include PC-Talk4 software (for
PC or MS-DOS compatible machines) at no extra cost. E+E also notes that
all of these upgraded products are now available for shipment.

PRICE REDUCTIONS announced by E+E cover its entire line of products
including the newly introduced versions. In the 1200bps range, the
external Avatex 1200hc dropped from a suggested retail of $199.00 to

$149.00 and the internal Avatex 1200i went from $149.00 to $119.00.
E+E's 2400bps products also dropped substantially. The Avatex 2400
external modem now lists for $279.00 (down from $399.00) and the Avatex
2400i internal PC modem lists for $269.00 (down from $319.00). Although
announced to its distributor channel in mid-October, E+E notes that
these new prices became effective November 2nd.

Elec & Eltek (USA) Corp. is a subsidiary of Elec & Eltek Ltd. Inc. in
California in 1984, Elec & Eltek (USA) Corp. markets the AVATEX line of
modem products sold through distribution to dealers and resellers,
VARS/VADS, as well as systems integrators and OEMs. The company currently
has sales and marketing facilities of approximately 4,000 sq. ft., and
has added an additional 5,000 sq ft. for customer service and warehouse
facilities. Elec & Eltek (USA) Corp. is located at 1230 Oakmead Parkway,
Suite 2310, Sunnyvale, California 94086, (408) 732-1181.

Hot on the heels of its recent Avatex product feature upgrades, Elec &
Eltek (USA) Corp. has also announced two brand new Avatex modems to
enhance its rapidly growing product line. One is the Avatex 2400MNP, a
full-featured external 2400bps modem with error control. The other is the
Avatex 1200e, a compact, fully-loaded Hayes compatible external 1200 bps
modem listed for under $100.00.

THE AVATEX 2400MNP features all the commands, options and functions of
its current Avatex 2400 modem with the addition of Microcom's MNP Level
5 error-control protocol. The addition of MNP Level 5 also includes data
compression, allowing the 2400 MNP modem to achieve data throughput
speeds of up to 4800+ bits-per-second. E+E notes that, with the addition
of this new Avatex product, it has joined the growing list of companies
supporting the MNP protocol. The Avatex 2400 MNP modem is scheduled to
be released for shipment in January, 1988 and will carry a suggested list
price of $429.00.

THE AVATEX 1200e modem is a 1200/300 bps standalone product featuring all
of the commands and options of its bigger brother, the Avatex 1200hc, in
a smaller 5"x6"x1" package. It includes such functions as manual/
automatic originate/answer, call progress option, Bell and CCITT
(international) operation at both 300 and 1200bps, and dip switches for
permanenat option settings. The 1200e was designed with the home, school
or portable computer user in mind, but should do well in any application
where high performance and space limits are a requirement. The biggest
news is that E+E has announced that the Avatex 1200e will carry a
suggested list price of only $99.00.

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ATARI NEWS UPDATE

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ATARI PRODUCT NEWS UPDATE: 1/27/88

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MICROSOFT WRITE
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In mid-January, the first shipments of Microsoft Write arrived at Atari's
warehouse and were shipped to Atari dealers.

This advanced word processor, with a list price of $129.95, is a direct
port of Microsoft Word 1.05 from the Macintosh. It features true
footnoting, a sophisticated variety of page setup features, and the
cleanest mouse interface of any ST word processor.

Microsoft Write fully supports GDOS. Included with the program is GDOS
version 1.8, along with a variety of proportional fonts. The fonts are
supported on the screen for a WYSIWYG performance.

In addition to GDOS output, Microsoft Write supports a wide variety of
common printers in their own text fonts. Printer drivers can be edited
by the user to support virtually any printer on the market.

Microsoft Write includes extras such as Mail Merge, Glossary, Undo,
Clipboard, Ruler, and page format changes throughout the document.

ATARI LASER PRINTER
----- ----- -------
The Atari SLM804 Laser Printer arrived to authorized dealers beginning
before the new year. This 8-page-per-minute system uses the TEC engine,
a write-white device which provides the sharpest possible blacks. Dot
density is 300 dots per inch.

The SLM804 connects directly to any ST or Mega computer via the DMA port.
Included is the SLMC804, which allows additional DMA devices (such as
hard disk drives) to be plugged into the DMA while the laser is attached.

The Atari Laser Printer's unique design has the ST or Mega driving the
engine directly, without mandating costly and slow electronics within the
laser. Even with only 512K of system RAM, an ST can drive the engine in
Diablo emulation mode and for screen dumps. The Diablo emulator supports
up to 8 type styles using GDOS fonts (GDOS itself is not required).

Also included with the printer are 2 disks of GDOS fonts. These laser
fonts correspont to the screen fonts provided with Microsoft Write.
Various point sizes are supported, from 6 point up to 48 point.

Existing software that takes advantage of GDOS includes MS Write and Easy
Draw. Using Easy Draw, outputs make full use of the 300 dpi resolution
of the printer for fine lines at any angle, smooth fonts, and bit images
from scanners. Easy Draw with Supercharger can output full pages of text
and graphics in well under a minute -- recent tests averaged 20-30
seconds per page. Multiple copies of a page take less time than the
original page.

The Atari Laser Printer has a list price of $1999. Replacement toner
cartridges sell for $59.95, and replacement drums list for $199.95. By
separating toner from drum, replacement costs and price per page come in
lower than other laser printing systems.

Software Review

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by Judith Zornberg

MaxThink

HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS: 512K Atari ST, 256K IBM PC, 512K Macintosh
PUBLISHER: MaxThink, (415) 428-0104
PRICE: $89
OVERALL RATING: Excellent

Remember your school days? Teachers were always telling you to construct
a complete outline to make it easier to write reports. Most of us
considered this a nuisance, and only did it if it had to be handed in.

But in truth, outlining before writing helps to organize and firm up your ideas, which also makes it more difficult to stray from your subject.

Enter MaxThink, an outliner (the publisher calls it an "idea processor") that can make writing better by helping you to brainstorm. Brainstorming allows you to enter your thoughts as they come to you, and then later move these ideas into the order you would like. With MaxThink you insert and delete ideas, create main headings and as many subheadings as you need, and collapse or expand the outline's framework at will. But this is just some of the help MaxThink offers. Since you will often be entering ideas without regard to order, the program allows you reorganize your outline according to your needs. You can place items in order of importance, sort headings, and reorganize the information entered in most imaginable ways.

Among other options is an alarm feature. For example, I set it to time intervals of 10 minutes, which reminded me to save my work. Should your outline include database-style headings such as Name, Address, and so forth, you can invoke the report generator, which helps you create organized printouts. Should you be concerned with how often specific words are used in an outline, the reference command will tell you. Actually MaxThink can, within very broad parameters, act like many other productivity programs. It is like a computer with open slots, waiting for your individual stamp in its configuration.

There is a command line at the bottom of the screen. Novices can invoke commands by pressing the spacebar to highlight the desired command, and ENTER to select it. For those who are past the novice level, pressing the first letter of the desired command along with ENTER also executes your choice. WordStar-like commands are used for editing text and moving around text screens, and work can be saved as an ASCII file for easy portability to most word processors.

While MaxThink is supposed to help you think before you write, you must first gain familiarity with the program before you can reach this goal. Until you're familiar, the program can be cumbersome due to its complexity; and it can hinder instead of help your writing due to breaks in concentration to find the correct command.

If you have been thinking of getting an outliner, consider MaxThink. Note, though, that novices might find the complex options too difficult to benefit their writing. The language used in the manual assumes some degree of computer literacy, as does the program itself. For someone already seasoned in computer usage, though, MaxThink can prove to be an excellent choice.

Product Announcment
    --From MichTron Inc.--

For Further Information Contact:
     Robert Washburn
     Director of Operations,
     MichTron Inc.

For Immediate Release:

MichTron presents GFA Artist, a vivid new animation program for the Atari ST that allows you creative flexibility. "It contains every possible graphic and animation function one could possibly ever use..."(ST World, Sept. 87).

Use GFA Artist to create pictures and complex animated forms and save them to disk. A special included program allows you to save them in a film file (a run-only version used without the program) so you can distribute your films to friends who don't own GFA Artist (yet!).

GFA Artist combines many special features of other animation programs into one package. You can incorporate text into your pictures in one of the four provided fonts or in a custom font you create with the Font Editor. You can create a cycling color effect, and even define your own fill pattern from part of your picture, instead of using a standard GEM fill pattern. You can merge several film files that have a file in common into a single file with the Film Merger. The Run Only Interpreter allows you to make extended films consisting of up to 20,000 frames.

GFA Artist effectively utilizes 2 different modes: Low-Res, the normal low resolution mode, and Low-Res Static, that lets you use over 1,000 colors on the screen at the same time! This is an ideal tool for making pictures with color-transitions for a rainbow effect.

Work in both low and medium resolution simultaneously! The special Function Selection Box integrates both low and medium resolution into one screen, combined with multiple palettes. You have the advantage of using the 80-character mode (medium resolution) for function selection together with the low resolution mode for art-work. This makes pull-down menus unnecessary.

For speedy constructions and wiz tricks, GFA Artist integrates machine language with GFA BASIC. The mouse is used as the control and input device whereever possible instead of the keyboard for ultimate ease of use! The size of your sprites is only limited by the size of your screen. The program is automatically compatible with all standard screen formats (DEGAS, Color Star, Neochrome). These conveniences add to the pleasure of creating and perfecting full color animation with your computer.

GFA Artist, from MichTron for $79.95, makes advanced creativity accessible and convenient! GFA Artist requires an Atari-ST with 1 MB of RAM, TOS in ROM, and a color monitor.

Probing Your ST
  --Regular Column--

Latest and Greatest Computer Tidbits II
(I wonder if there will be as many of these as there are Rocky movies?)

by Mr. Goodprobe

Lets continue our trek into the never-diminishing flow of new computer information....

If you have you heart in your computer, then this sliver of information may really brighten your day. The National Assn. of Computer Dealers, a group which publishes the Computer Blue Book, is planning to start a unique data base shortly. This will contain owner information and computer serial numbers in case of computer theft. If your equipment is stolen, you will then be urged to call this group to check on used equipment that is for sale to make sure it isn't stolen. (The number, when posted, will be toll-free they say.) They have already contacted insurance companies, law enforcement agencies, and computer manufacturers

for their help in compiling a list of serial numbers of stolen machines.

Apple and IBM are already working full tilt on their next machines, although Apple appears it will triumph in this race. It will be showing a new 68030 based machine this spring, while IBM's new Desktop-Mainframe PC called the Model 90 is at least 3 years away.

Did you know that far and away the best selling printer of 1987 was the Panasonic 1080I?!?

One program you will really relish if it holds up by the time it gets to the St is Dark Castle, a stupendous graphics/text adventure. You will find the opening music will turn your head...promise!!!

Since we have heard that Atari will soon be in the parallel processing market, did you know that these systems range in price from $70,000 for a unit with eight processors to quite a bit over a million for a unit with 1,000 processors. At that rate, the Atari prices are indeed a bargain and we can see they will really make some waves!!!

Springboard software has suffered 2 consecutive heavy loss periods, I sure hope they release their new product, Springboard Publisher, soon, this company has been at the top of my list and I sure want it to stay that way...

Well, it appears if you think you might need some 3 1/2 disks, you better snatch a batch now, because the price is going up REAL soon. Due to the price of the revalued Yen and higher than anticipated demand for these little guys, the price is on its way up. Sony has already announced that it will raise its prices 10% on Feb. 1st 1988, and Fuji also has announced it will follow suit. A quote from a gentleman at Maxell explains the price increase. "We see no reason whatsoever to continue to sell 3 1/2 in. disks at present levels when we have so many backorders."

So where can a soul dig up some inexpensive quality disks before the price goes up? Well..here's my belated Christmas gift to all you St-owners out there, some great prices on Sony 3 1/2 disks can be found at:

    Belmont Distributing, Inc. 1-800-328-2488
    Bulk Sony 3 1/2 SS/DD 87 cents (fine for DS usage)

    CSS   1-800-422-4912
                             1-800-331-SOFT (Illinois)
    Bulk Sony 3 1/2 SS/DD 86 cents (fine for DS usage)

There, that ought to take a bit of the strain off your pocketbook!

You probably will also see Apple bring out a 21" monitor for the MacII real soon...

And now for the bad news...There is a bill before Congress right now that would require mail order houses to begin charging state sales tax on all orders. Some of our bargains may soon be slipping out of reach! Augh!

By the way, Spinnaker has come out with several new programs for the IBM, on 3 1/2 disk format, and it might do well if someone were to check and see if they work fine with PC Ditto. In all, they have 11 titles out for the IBM in 3 1/2 format. If "Better Working Running Start " works, this would be an excellent program to buy as it has a DOS tutorial in it, a typing tutor, and a full-featured word processor to boot!

A few months back we had an excellent article here in Zmag on how you could use a Commodore 1351 mouse with your 8 bit Atari. The best price I have seen on this item is $33 and is available from NCD, you can reach them by calling 1-800-255-4489, except florida where you would have to dial 1-800-433-5131.

Need a great price on a 2400 baud modem? Well, I think $149 is juicy enough to bite eh? CMO (Computer Mail Order), is the company selling these Supra 2400 baud modems. I am sure you can unearth their phone number in any Antic or Analog.

Lastly, in case you are interested, I was checking out the stocks for the last week in December, and low and behold Atari was one of the big gainers, with 10,151 shares sold, a volume increase of 110.8 % over the previous week! Hmmm...interesting...

        Till next time,
                            Keep those Atari's hummin!
                                 Mr. Goodprobe
                                 (on lend from)
                                   Midtown TV
                              Atari 8/16 Sales/Repair

_____
Another CES Report

_____
Author Unknown

I have just returned from CES, the Consumer Electronic Show, in LasVegas. Commodore and Atari were not there unless they were hiding somewhere in a hotel suite. Due to the nature of this show only computer games were shown. I found five new ones that seem like they will be winners. From Electronic Arts the new offerings are THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER and INTERCEPTOR.

From Cinemaware comes THE THREE STOOGES and ROCKETRANGER. First Row Software is releasing PRIME TIME.

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER is based on Tom Clancy's best seller of the same name and is about a defecting soviet sub. The game appears to be closely following the book and will give you quite a challenging time. Release date is set for the end of this month. List price $39.95.

INTERCEPTOR will have you piloting either an F-18 or a F-16. There are different missions flown with either fighter. The one I saw demoed was using a carrier launched F-18 with a F-16 as wingman. The action was quite good and it seems like it too will be a real winner. Release is set for April. List price $49.95.

THE THREE STOOGES is just what the name implies. Yes you will find Larry, Moe and Curly Joe in their antics here with woo woo woo and nyaknyak nyak everywhere. In fact I was told there is a MEGABYTE of soundin it. The action seemed to move along well so I feel it too has a good future awaiting it. Release due this month. No price announced.

ROCKET RANGER was shown in a pre-release form it was three disks large and was said to have NO CP. This is a take off on the 30's and 40's movie serials and those of you that are old enough to remember Rocketman serials will really enjoy this game. It will have a main plot plus many sub-plots to keep you busy. The main theme is an invasion ofspace-nazis.

It's due out this month too. No price given.

PRIME TIME makes you the program director of a TV network. You get to buy
TV shows, Do lunch and say show biz phrases. Your goal is rating and
keeping your network afloat. It has good graphics and sound (so they say
as it was not demoed). Release date is March 1. List price $39.95.

CompuServe Review

---

by Warren Lieuallen

Reprinted from Fuji Facts (the Newsletter of the Atari Computer
Enthusiasts of Columbus)

Many of you have heard talk during the meetings similar to "... and I
heard on CompuServe..." or "... this new file from CompuServe...".
Perhaps you'd like to know just what is this "CompuServe".

Simply put, CompuServe is probably the largest BBS in the country, if not
the world! It actually started as a "Rent-a-Mainframe" company, selling
time on one of its huge mainframe computers to companies that just
couldn't justify the expense of purchasing one of these behemoths
themselves. Realizing the potential of the then un-tapped personal
computing market, they also sold computer time to owners of smaller,
"home computers" (that's you and me!).

This led to the formation of the special interest groups (SIG's), also
known as forums. People interested in specific topics (such as Atari
computers, or photography, or gardening, or....) each have a specific
area assigned to them. With in each forum, a number of different
activities take place.

Certainly the two most popular activities are the message base, and the
software library. These both really serve similar purposes: the exchange
of information and programs dealing with the Atari computers. Here is
where the advantage of size is most obvious. Just ask a question in the
Atari SIG, and within a day or two, you'll have received several answers.
Just think of a task for your Atari; there's a program in the libraries
that can do it.

When you're first starting out on CompuServe, everything works via menus.
At every level, you are shown all of your choices, and given a brief
explanation of them. These menus are very helpful, because to the new
user, CompuServe's sheer size presents a problem in the complexity of its
organization. Several hours on-line will be required before you begin to
feel comfortable. Although not required, once you do become more
familiar with the structure and function of the SIG, you'll probably
progress to the "expert" mode, which eliminates all the menus altogether.

As an example, here's the introductory menu to the Atari eight-bit SIG:

    CompuServe   Atari8

    WELCOME TO ATARI 8-BIT FORUM, V.

    HELLO, WARREN LIEUALLEN   LAST VISIT: 04-NOV-87 14:52:54

    FORUM MESSAGES: 196605 TO 197247
    LAST MESSAGE YOU'VE READ: 196753

```
     SUBTOPIC(S) SELECTED:   ALL ACCESSIBLE
     NO MEMBERS ARE IN CONFERENCE.

     ATARI 8-BIT FORUM FUNCTIONS
      1 (L)  LEAVE A MESSAGE
      2 (R)  READ MESSAGES
      3 (CO) CONFERENCE MODE
      4 (DL) DATA LIBRARIES
      5 (B)  BULLETINS
      6 (MD) MEMBER DIRECTORY
      7 (OP) USER OPTIONS
      8 (IN) INSTRUCTIONS


     ENTER CHOICE !
```

You now select which area of the forum to use. Let's say you want to
read some messages. Select "R" from the menu, and you'll be presented
with the following:

```
READ MESSAGES
 1 (RF) FORWARD
 2 (RR) REVERSE
 3 (RT) THREADS
 4 (RS) SEARCH
 5 (RM) MARKED
 6 (RI) INDIVIDUAL
 7 (QS) QUICK SCAN
 8 (BR) BROWSE


ENTER CHOICE !
```

At this point, there is a bit of a dilemma. Aside from confusion about
things like "threads" and the difference between "browsing" and
"scanning", the major problem is simply the volume of messages present
within the forum. What is most difficult for most CompuServe users to
accept is the fact that you simply can't read it all (unless you happen
to be independently wealthy!). There are more than 150 messages posted
every day; to keep up with all of them would not only require a
significant amount of time, it would also drain your finances to a new
low!

So, the technique of selective reading becomes important. Luckily, there
are several different, and easy ways to do this. I'll leave the details
to a future article or demo.

All right, you've read some messages now. One of them mentioned a
fantastic new program found in one of the software libraries. So, from
the main menu, you pick "DL". Here's what you'll see:

```
DATA LIBRARIES AVAILABLE:

 0 GENERAL
 1 GAMES
 2 TELECOMMUNICATIONS
 3 UTILITIES
 4 GRAPHICS/RLE/PICS
 5 APPLICATION PGMS
 6 SOUND & MUSIC
 7 NEWS & REVIEWS
 9 BBS PROGRAMS/INFO
```

```
11 ICD/KYAN/OSS FILES
12 SIG OLDIES/CLASSICS

ENTER CHOICE !
```

Once you've narrowed your choice down to one of these categories, you may
then directly select the file (if you know its name), or "browse" through
the directory. Keywords are used to narrow down your selections, and all
files are accompanied by a short description, so you can decide whether
to download the file or not.

Notice that several of the choices pertain not to program categories, but
to specific companies. These are areas reserved to these software
manufacturers for distribution of upgrades, and user modifications to the
programs, as well as text files full of helpful information. These areas
are also very useful for contacting the manufacturer with any questions
you might have. To me, this demonstrates customer support to the
extreme!

There's also DL #12, which contains an archive of "The Best of
CompuServe". This is where all of the most popular and useful files are
placed, making them easier to find. I'm working on compiling a complete
directory (with descriptions), and will make it available to the club
when it's done.

Another useful area of the forum is the bulletins section. Similar to
most private bulletin board systems, CompuServe has some information
they'd like you to know. The easiest way to see it is to read the
bulletins by selecting "B" from the main menu. Here's how:

```
BULLETINS
 1 SHORT
 2 REGULAR
 3 CONFERENCE
 4 DATA LIBRARY
 5 MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION
 6 SYSOP ROSTER
 7 NEW MEMBER

ENTER CHOICE !
```

The short bulletins are displayed the first time you enter the forum; the
regular bulletins usually just add more in-depth information for those
interested. The data library bulletins are presented used to list the
prior week's uploads, which makes it easier to keep current as to what's
available in all the DL's.

One of the nicer features of the CompuServe forums is that they can be
tailored to your particular needs. By selecting options from the main
menu, you're presented with this:

```
USER OPTIONS
[ ] REPRESENTS CURRENT SETTING
 1 (SM) STOP AFTER MSGS
 2 (CN) NAME   [WARREN LIEUALLEN]
 3 (PC) PROMPT CHARACTER  [>]
 4 (ED) EDITOR  [EDIT]
 5 (SU) SUBTOPICS  [...]
 6 (HI) HIGH MSG READ  [196753]
 7 (RE) REPLIES INFO  [LIST]
```

```
 8 (UM) USE MENUS  [NO]
 9 (TY) TYPE WAITING MSGS  [YES]
10 (SK) SKIP MSGS YOU LEFT [YES]
```

As you can see, you can customize many of the ways in which the forum
works. This flexibility is just one of the strong points of the
CompuServe forums. They manage to serve just about everyone's needs, and
with just a little introductory work, you should be able to get around
and find what you want quickly and easily. I highly recommend it to
anyone wanting to learn more about their Atari computer.

Don't get me wrong, CompuServe is not perfect. It takes some getting
used to, and sometimes it's too large; messages scroll off the message
base as quickly as they are posted (if you don't call once a week or so,
you may miss a message directed specifically at you). By far the major
disadvantage though is cost.

Through a new policy, there is no longer a difference between "prime
time" (day time) and "discount time" (evening and weekend) rates.
CompuServe's rates are always (as far as I know) $6.00 per hour for 300
baud, $12.50/hr for 1200 baud and $19.00/hr for 2400 baud. These rates
are at the high end of the range for similar services, and do not include
the communications surcharge (which ranges from $0.25/hr for a direct-
dial CompuServe node to $2.00/hr for Telenet or Tymnet to $14.00/hr for
Tymnet via Western Union for subscribers in Hawaii!

Although these rates boil down to $0.10 per minute at 300 baud, and $0.21
per minute at 1200 baud, they really do add up. It's distressingly
simple to call up just to "read a few messages", and end up staying on
for more than an hour. Do this every weekend for a year and you just
spent over $300! And I haven't even mentioned the very addicting real-
time CB simulator and multi-player games!

I've been a CompuServe subscriber for nearly two years, and I'm very
happy with it. It fills a need for information and assistance that I
just can't seem to get anywhere else. Got a question about PaperClip?
Why call me when you can leave a message to Dan Moore, one of the
program's authors?! Need a utility to remove extra carriage returns, or
print double column text, but don't want to write it yourself? For ten
minutes download time (approx. $1.00), It's yours!

It's hard to beat!

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